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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Monday, May 13, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE TIPS ON BUYING FURNITURE." Information from the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Almost every woman buys furniture at one time or another. Yet few of them know enough about the way furniture is put together to judge for themselves whether it will stand up and give lasting service.

So today here are a few tips from wood experts of the U. S. Forest Service to help you buy well-made furniture.

The first question to decide is whether you want solid wood furniture, or veneer or plywood furniture. Veneered furniture and plywood are practically the same. So let's just use the simple word "plywood." Plywood is made by gluing layers of wood together so the grain of each layer is at right angles to the next.

Solid wood furniture usually contains little plywood except perhaps in a few hidden minor parts.

But plywood furniture may contain both plywood and solid wood. Table tops, drawer fronts, doors, side and end panels, drawer bottoms, and backing are usually of plywood. Table legs, chair posts, and arms and turnings are usually of solid wood. A great deal of furniture made today is plywood.

Plywood has several advantages over solid wood. It allows for beauty at not too great a cost. The manufacturer can use less expensive wood for the unseen parts, and then cover with a thin layer of valuable decorative wood. This allows for a wide variety of beautiful wood surfaces. Another advantage of well-made plywood is that it is less likely to warp than solid wood.

This is especially true of the thick wide plywood used for table and bureau tops. For the furniture-maker plywood has many advantages, too. He can dry the wood very cheaply and quickly. And he can make best use of all his wood.

Some of the most highly valued wood for the surface layers on furniture comes from the crotch of a tree where the trunk branches. Careful slicing of this crotch wood and then careful matching of the pattern in the wood gives a handsome symmetrical design. Stumps and burl wood also make beautiful patterns in veneer. Some of the woods used for face veneer are cut in slices as thin as one-twentieth of an inch.

When you go to buy plywood furniture, you can't see in the finished piece whether the plywood is well-made or not. But here's one way to get an idea. Notice whether the patterns of the wood surfaces match perfectly. Careless matching is a fair sign of careless workmanship in other parts of the furniture.

Now for some other points to look for when you buy furniture. Needless to say, all good furniture stands firmly on a level floor and doesn't wobble when you try to shake it.

If you are buying a chair, turn it upside down. See if the wood underneath is smooth and not splintery. And see if the wood underneath has a coat of varnish or other finish to keep moisture out and prevent warping. Notice, too, whether each corner has a block underneath to hold it firm. The corner block should be screwed and glued in place, not nailed.

If the legs of a chair are curved and cut from one piece of wood, be sure no abrupt cross grain comes where the leg starts to slope backward. This is a place that may crack or break especially if a heavy person takes the chair and tilts backward.

The joints of a piece of furniture are a most important guide to quality. To get strongly made joints insist on double dowels, or mortise and tenon joints. I'll repeat those terms again, in case they are unfamiliar to you: double dowels or mortise and tenon joints. A dowel is a wooden peg or pin that fits firmly into holes bored in the wood to join the pieces of wood together. Double doweling means 2 pegs: triple doweling, 3 pegs. Avoid furniture joined with only one peg or a steel peg. As for a mortise and tenon joint, that's where a tongue cut in one piece of wood fits into a groove cut in the other piece. Either double doweling or mortise and tenoning is a sign of firm construction.

When you go to buy a bureau or desk or any furniture with drawers, look at the corner of the drawer. It should be a well-fitted dovetail joint. Notice whether the notches really do fit, or whether they're filled in with a lot of glue. When you pull the drawer half way out, see if it comes out evenly and smoothly, does not bind or is loose and has a lot of play. If it doesn't fit well, the drawer may give you trouble when it is full.

If the furniture has any carving, see whether the carving is in the body of the wood or is a separate piece glued on. Examine all moulding and trim to see that it is fastened securely. If the piece is supposed to be inlaid, be sure it <u>is</u> inlaid, and not just a painting applied on the surface. Plain wood is a much better buy than an imitation job of inlay.

Finally, examine the hardware on the furniture--hinges, handles, and brackets. Good quality furniture has well-made hardware.

These are just a few suggestions to help you get your money's worth when you buy furniture.

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